

What People Ought to Know About Consumption

By PROF. KOCH.

Berlin.—Prof. Koch thinks that the following data about consumption ought to be generally known:

Danger of infection by milk and meat of tuberculous animals is so rare that it need hardly be taken into consideration.

Of consumptives, sufferers from consumption of the lungs and the throat alone are a general menace because they are great producers of tubercle bacilli, which they distribute far and wide by their saliva and sputum, even by their breath. When a sufferer from lung tuberculosis sneezes in your presence he may cut short your life unless you take precautions at once.

But there are numerous cases where the family and servants of sufferers from tuberculosis of the throat and lungs escape the menace, though living in its midst for years. Reason: The afflicted person is a paragon of cleanliness and well-to-do enough to afford frequent changes of clothes, airy rooms, etc. By keeping the windows open day and night, the sufferer prevents the accumulation of dangerous bacilli, and by taking reasonable care in breathing, sneezing and by abstaining from spitting, he preserves the health of others.

A sufferer from lung or throat tuberculosis, on the other hand, who objects to light and air and doesn't obey hygienics and the laws of cleanliness and decency becomes the murderer of his friends. Rather sleep out of doors, than breathe the same air with a consumptive at night. It would be better to rest on the bare floor than to occupy the best bed in the world with a consumptive. The illness above described is technically called "open consumption." Sufferers from other sorts of consumption have their disease classified as "closed consumption."

Victims of "closed consumption" are not necessarily a menace to their fellow beings, and even open consumptives may be tolerated in the family when they are cleanly, well-to-do enough to afford special comforts, and fond of fresh air and sun.

Sympathy for the sick is very well, but protection for the healthy is better. Germany has tried the problem and in some communities cases of consumption durst no more be suppressed than cases of yellow fever. This is as it should be. American communities should insist that all cases of "open consumption" at least be reported and recorded.

I am well aware that not all physicians are qualified to decide on the stigmata of consumption. To that end every self-respecting community should establish, in connection with one of its hospitals, an office where the sputum of suspected cases is investigated by experts. If the sputum contains tuberculous bacilli, society must see to it that the unhappy sufferer does not become a menace to the community.

It is impossible to isolate all cases of consumption, by taking the sufferers out of harm's way and placing them in hospitals. It is not absolutely necessary, either. If the worst cases are isolated, much will be gained. For example: If Germany was to place all her consumptives in hospitals, accommodations for 200,000 would have to be found. Cleanliness, the spread of hygienic knowledge, love of fresh air and sunlight are great aids to the boards of health in every country under the globe. England's press has done much to warn the people against slovenliness and contamination, and as a result the death rate from consumption is steadily decreasing there. When I say England, I mean England proper. In Scotland the decrease is very slight and in Ireland there is no decrease whatever.

A sufferer from lung and throat consumption is the more dangerous the more he nears his end. He becomes helpless, careless. His sputum is everywhere, he won't allow a window to be opened or any ventilation whatever. Hence the authorities in England, as well as in Prussia, make it a practice to let such sick people spend their last months on earth in a hospital.

I repeat: It seems impossible to place all consumptives in hospitals, but every community should be able to afford to let consumptives die in hospitals. This is absolutely necessary in the interest of the living, and for a hospital to refuse to take in consumptives is a crime not only to the sufferer, but particularly to the living.

The sanitariums and the hospitals should divide the care for consumptives. Let the sanitariums take only patients in whom the disease has made little progress; let the hospitals take care of hopeless cases. I have the utmost faith in the Celmotte dispensaries.

To sum up: Consumption must be fought by reports to the sanitary authorities; by sanitariums; by hospitals, and by instruction to the afflicted and the public in general. Every friend of the human race who can afford it should help educate the people to the recognition of the threatening danger. Lectures, pamphlets, individual instruction are to be advocated. Several governments have made laws compelling that consumption cases be reported. All governments should do so. All governments should go further and decree the absolute isolation of "open consumptives," when they become a menace to their fellow beings. Furthermore all governments should enact building laws providing light and ventilation, even for the poorest of the poor. Consumption cannot live in sunshine and fresh air. Consumption thrives on dirt.

PROFESSOR KOCH.

Over the Side.

(Continued from Page Nine.)

"He means his wife and youngsters!" he shouted eagerly. "This ain't no Jem Dadd!"

It was good then to see how our fellows drew round the dying sailor, and strove to cheer him. Bill, to show he understood the finger business, nodded cheerily, and held his hand at four different heights from the floor. The last was very low, so low that the man set his lips together, and strove to turn his heavy head from us.

"Poor devil!" said Bill, "he wants us to tell his wife and children what's become of him. He must ha' been dying when he come aboard. What was his name, again?"

But the name was not easy to English lips, and we had already forgotten it.

"Ask him again," said the cook, "and write it down. Who's got a pen?"

He went to look for one as Bill turned to the sailor to get him to repeat it. Then he turned round again, and eyed us blankly, for, by this time, the owner had himself forgotten it.

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